Resolution on the situation in Belarus

2005/2524(RSP) - 10/03/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on Belarus.

The text adopted in plenary had been tabled as a joint resolution by the EPP-ED, PES, ALDE, Greens /EFA and UEN groups.

Parliament strongly condemns the systematic and increasing harassment and intimidation carried out by State officials, in particular the Ministry of Information, against journalists, editors and media outlets that are critical of the President of the Republic or the Government of Belarus. It equally condemns indiscriminate attacks against members of the opposition, human rights activists and any person who attempts freely to voice criticism of the President and the regime.

It recalls that Mikhail Marynich, ex-Minister for Foreign Economic Relations, former Ambassador and presidential candidate in the mid-2001 elections, was sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment (which was reduced to 3 years and 6 months) for political reasons. Parliament believes that this trail is proof of the lack of judicial independence in Belarus, betraying a general lack of respect for the rule of law and an overall climate of political repression. It calls on the Belarus authorities to **release Mikhail Marynich immediately and unconditionally as well as all other** imprisoned political opponents of the regime including Professor Bandazhevsky, a medical academic specialising in nuclear medicine who was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment for his open criticism of the State authorities related to scientific research into the Chernobyl nuclear reactor disaster of 1986.

Parliament recalls that Belarus is the only European country without contractual relations with the EU due to massive human rights violations and **calls on the Council to condemn the current Belarus regime as a dictatorship** and President Lukashenko as a dictator. It calls on the Council and the Governments of the Member States to identify and freeze the personal assets of President Lukashenko and those other senior members of the regime who ensure the continuation of the dictatorship.

Parliament also calls on Belarus to bring the actions of its police and security forces into conformity with its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and to immediately cease the harassment of all educational institutions in the country as is the case in Minsk. It calls for the creation of a special educational programme to grant scholarships, especially for students from the European Humanities University (EHU) in Minsk, who would like to study in the European Union.

Further, Parliament stresses that a **policy of sanctions** against Belarus will **target only the authorities of that country** and will not in any way affect Belarusian society. It points out that no diplomatic and political efforts should be spared to bring Belarus back to the European family, recalling that the further development of EU relations with Belarus will continue to depend on the progress made towards democratisation and reform in the country.

Parliament calls once again for an action plan for further ways to increase support for all remaining democratic forces in Belarus and its civil society.

Lastly, it regrets the Commission’s silence following the EU-Russian Troika concerning any discussions that may have taken place about the human rights situation in Belarus, particularly the issues of political disappearances and the ruthless suppression of freedom of speech.

It calls on the EU institutions to insist that **human rights issues should be a standing item on the agenda of all future EU-Russia meetings**.